

Stroke...



It's about Time

Stroke is a medical emergency. The longer you wait to call 9-1-1 when you are having any signs or symptoms, the more you lose brain cells or your ability to return to a normal life.

Frequently asked questions: What is a stroke?

A stroke is damage to part of the brain tissue as a result of a loss of blood and oxygen. This can occur within a few minutes or hours. A stroke is often referred to as a "brain attack."

What happens during a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood vessels to the brain become damaged or blocked, preventing blood from reaching a part of the brain tissue. Brain tissue needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients to keep it alive and functioning. When the tissue is cut off from its' supply of oxygen for 3 or 4 minutes, it begins to die.

What are the types of stroke?

- **Hemorrhagic stroke** is the most serious. This type of stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures.
- **Ischemic stroke** occurs when a blood vessel in the brain develops a clot, cutting off oxygen supplied to the brain.
- **Transient Ischemic attack (TIA)**, also referred to as a "mini-stroke", occurs when the blood flow to part of the brain is cut off for a short period of time, usually less than 15 minutes. A TIA is a warning sign that something is wrong and should be treated seriously.

What are the warning signs of a stroke?

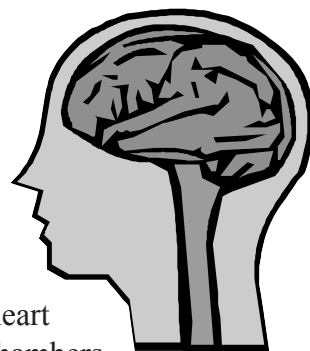
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

A stroke is a medical emergency. If you experience any of the major warning signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

If the symptoms appear for only a very short time and then disappear, it could be a Transient Ischemic Attack or TIA. It is important to call 9-1-1 whenever you have any symptoms.

What are the risk factors for stroke?

- High Blood Pressure (hypertension)
- High Cholesterol
- Heart Disease
- Smoking
- Heavy Drinking
- Overweight and Physical Inactivity
- Past history of stroke or TIA
- Diabetes
- Atrial Fibrillation - an uncontrolled heart rhythm that occurs when the upper chambers of the heart or atria beats so fast that the atria can only quiver
- Peripheral Artery Disease - a condition that causes poor circulation in the legs
- Certain Blood Disorders
- Certain Illegal Drugs



About half a million Americans suffer from stroke each year. These strokes are often preventable by making lifestyle changes.

What are the risk factors I can't control?

- 1. Increasing age** - As we get older, our risk of stroke is greater.
- 2. History of stroke** - Those who have had a stroke are at higher risk of having another one.
- 3. Race** - African Americans and Hispanics have a higher risk of death and disability from stroke
- 4. Gender** - More men than women have strokes in certain age groups, but more women actually die from stroke.
- 5. Heredity** - Those who have a family member, that is a blood relative who had a stroke, have a greater risk for stroke themselves.



What treatments exist for stroke? And..How much time do I have?

The only drug currently approved by the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) is a thrombolytic agent called Tissue Plasminogen Activator (TPA). This is often referred to as "clot buster" medication. TPA must be given **within the first three hours** of an onset of stroke symptoms. That is why it is important to seek medical help immediately.



Remember!!!!

- Seconds matter.....Call 9-1-1 because it is the quickest access to ambulance and the right treatment.
- Know the warning signs!
- If you notice the warning signs, note the time when they started.

What can I do to prevent a stroke?

There are many helpful handouts on stroke prevention topics. Please visit www.hearthighway.org for more information on the items with an *.

- 1.** Know your blood pressure. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke.*
- 2.** Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (an uncontrolled heart rhythm that occurs when the upper chambers of the heart or atria beats so fast that the atria only can quiver).
- 3.** If you smoke, stop. Smoking doubles your risk for stroke.*
- 4.** If you drink, do so in moderation.
- 5.** Know your cholesterol number. If it is high, work with your doctor to control it.*
- 6.** If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations.*
- 7.** Enjoy a lower sodium (salt) diet and a lower fat diet.*
- 8.** Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems.
- 9.** Get regular exercise.
- 10.** Maintain a healthy weight.*
- 11.** Manage your stress.*
- 12.** See your doctor regularly.
- 13.** If you have any stroke symptoms, call 9-1-1 and seek help immediately.

